

I'm outraged at Sinclair's total disregard for fairness and the democratic process. This is an ideal example of why we, as the world's leading democratic nation, cannot allow the type of media consolidation that has been going on in recent years. A corporation with a clear bias has the power to unfairly influence hundreds of thousands of individuals in the days leading up to the most crucial election of my lifetime.

The fact is that John Kerry does not deserve to suffer another batch of lies intended to tarnish his relatively good reputation. I'm no Kerry apologist, but I can recognize unfounded attacks when I see them. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, while making totally unfounded claims that have since been proven false, managed to severely tarnish Kerry's credibility. The irony is that our president, who has made the truly colossal mistake of misleading our nation into an unnecessary and extremely damaging war, and who, I might add, evaded serious military service, is enduring relatively little serious criticism considering the scale of his faults. Sinclair corporation, which earlier declined to air a legitimate documentary -- not politically-charged attack material-- about the brave young men and women killed in Iraq, is now using every means in their power to influence their viewership by launching political attacks on John Kerry. In a democracy, this is truly appalling.

In a healthy, thriving democracy, the decision of a media group to air biased material is not entirely troubling. It's not the bias in itself; it's the hegemonic control of the media through which biased programs are transmitted to the public that is troubling. In fact, if public airwaves were used by the public independently of corporate ownership, local stations could produce virtually any type of programming that they desire -- from whatever political perspective -- as long as the public has some say in the programming and the views are appreciated by a modest portion of the local population. So for example, in any given region it's ok for there to be a station with a libertarian slant, as well as others with a moderate, left-of-center, conservative, or anarchist perspective. Then the public has a choice. Given greater media consolidation it becomes imperative that media companies claim to provide unbiased news, when in fact no news source is without bias. The real result is that media outlets copy each other in an attempt to appear unbiased. You get very few dissenting viewpoints, except when individuals as tactless as those who control Sinclair step out of line in attempt to exact political results. Given the lack of local outlets and the overwhelming influence and power of media conglomerates, in this type of situation ordinary people aren't able to do much. They can do as I am doing and complain to the FCC, but what good can I expect that to do when the FCC is relaxing rules on media ownership, allowing corporations to own up to 35% of the market share in any given locale nationwide. The FCC, which has not only the power, but the responsibility to look out

for the public interest is sitting on this one.

The argument for media consolidation is an exceptionally weak one. The gist of it is that media conglomerates bring high quality news in a way that independent stations couldn't due to lack of resources, financial and technological. Besides, they say, nowadays with the internet people can get their news from a nearly unlimited number of sources if they so desire. The truth is that the largest media conglomerates (i.e. AOL Time Warner, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., etc.) really do have a tremendous influence on people, especially the vast majority who are not politically involved and who's complacency is reinforced by irresponsible coverage which seeks the shocking scandal or the celebrity crack up, over more subtle and significant issues facing the US and the world today.

The best idea I've come up with so far: Turn off the TV. Get news from the net. Maybe check out BBC World News, the International Herald Tribune, NPR, or the C-SPAN website. Because media conglomerates don't have your best interest in mind, and Bill O' Reilly, even when he's not asking his producer to have phone sex, will not bring you enlightenment.